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Is Latin America part of the West?

Emilio Lamo de Espinosa



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Emilio Lamo de Espinosa | Emeritus Professor of Sociology, UCM | @PresidenteRIE

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Introduction¹

Over recent years, and from opposite ends of the political spectrum, paradoxically similar theses have been put forward suggesting that Latin America belongs to its own cultural and civilisational universe, ie, one distinct from what is commonly referred to as the 'West'. Whether from a nativist or indigenist Latin American viewpoint or from an Anglo 'Midwest' viewpoint, the idea of a distinct Latin American civilisation has been advocated by different parties, who remain seemingly unaware of their surprising coincidence.

The new Latin American indigenist movement rejects all things Western in the name of preserving the native essences and identities allegedly destroyed by colonisation in the first instance and subsequently by the Creole republics.² Evo Morales' Movement for Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in Ecuador and the *Movimiento Etnocacerista* in Peru, apart from denouncing ethnic discrimination against the 'first peoples' (a charge not entirely without foundation), have gone from affirming the virtues of all things home-grown to a rejection of all things foreign. Thus, to cite one example, drawn from the MAS manifesto:

'There have been 500 years of European presence and 176 of republican life. Over these 500 years we have been dominated by the cosmology of Western

¹ The author delivered a talk in Washington DC in 2007 titled '*La frontera entre el mundo anglosajón y el hispano. ¿Es América Latina Occidente?*', which was subsequently published in Eduardo Garrigues & Antonio López Vega (Eds.) (2013), *España y Estados Unidos en la era de las independencias*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, pp. 357-366. This working paper is an updated, expanded and revised version of that talk.

² Luis Esteban González Manrique (2005), *El "etnonacionalismo": las nuevas tensiones interétnicas en América Latina*, ARI nr 59/2005, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid, 11/V5/2005, http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/ari+59-2005

culture... The concepts of globalisation and the market economy are embedded in the Western cosmology, just like the old concept of progress that gave rise to the scientific paradigm of modernity... The so-called Western century of Enlightenment has gone past its sell-by date and no longer offers humanity any possibility... Our cultural roots, the Andean and Amazonian cultures, have triumphed over the founding principles of Western culture.'

As Evo Morales roundly declared, '12 October (1492) was a tragedy'.

But note that when President Trump sets about building a wall on the border with Mexico to stem the tide of Latino immigrants, when he endeavours (largely unsuccessfully, as it happens) to deport those who already reside in the US, when he insults both groups, calling them 'bad hombres' and accuses them of being rapists and murderers, all because he wants to 'Make America Great Again', he is engaging in a kind of symmetrical rejection and stigmatisation, not devoid of racism, but that, as will be seen in what follows, has the support of a considerable intellectual tradition. Thus, while the Columbus monument in Caracas was destroyed in 2004 by enraged followers of Hugo Chávez, another attack took place in the summer of 2017 on the Columbus monument in Baltimore, in this case perpetrated by 'politically correct' citizens in the name of the 'campaign against hatred'.

The notion that Latin America does not form part of the West is not as outlandish as it might appear at first glance. It is part of a cast of collective representations –as Emile Durkheim might have put it– that are well-established and accepted in the Western intellectual universe. Some good examples in this regard are books about Latin American civilisation such as the *History of Latin American Civilization*, edited by Lewis Hanke,³ or Keen's *Latin American Civilization*,⁴ a classic text published for the first time in 1955 and reissued many times since, and surely one of the most (if not *the* most) widely used. And I cite these two, among many others that could be added to the list, because Keen and Hanke conducted a famous debate about the nature of Latin America, although neither of them rejected (or even questioned) the appropriateness of the 'civilisation' label to refer to the region.

In contrast, it seems as if though the northern hemisphere exists within the Western framework such that it makes no sense to talk about a '(North) American civilisation', but things change south of the Rio Grande and we enter a region of a 'Latin American civilisation', evidently linked to another 'Hispanic civilisation'. What accounts for this lack of symmetry? Does it make sense? Can we talk of a separate Latin American civilisation as distinct from Western civilisation? These are the main questions addressed in this paper.

³ Lewis Hanke (Ed.) (1969), *History of Latin American Civilization*, Methuen, London, 1969.

⁴ Benjamin Keen, Robert Buffington & Lila Caimari (Eds.) (2004), *Keen's Latin American Civilization: History & Society, 1492 to the Present*, Westview Press.

(cont.)

What are civilisations?

Arjomand and Tiryakian, in *Rethinking Civilizational Analysis*,⁵ have identified three waves of sociological interest in civilisations. The first is linked to the Webers (Max and Alfred), Durkheim and his nephew Mauss. Meriting particular emphasis is the Durkheim and Mauss publication of 1913, *Note on the Notion of Civilization*, in which they articulate the idea that certain social phenomena have a 'coefficient of expansion and internationalisation' that gives rise to civilisations and 'civilisational complexes',⁶ an idea akin to that of Weber and his 'universal-historical' phenomena. The second generation comprises Sorokin, Norbert Elias and Benjamin Nelson, as well as certain works by the young Merton. The third and last is represented by Eisenstadt, Huntington and Tiryakian himself.

Over the course of this evolution we find a subtle line of argument, already hinted at: the triumph of cultures, in the plural, over civilisation, in the singular. In the first generation it seems clear that there is only one civilisation (Western, naturally) but many cultures. But by the third generation civilisation has become, as Huntington notes, 'culture writ large'. 'Civilisation' comes to be understood simply as a 'cultural family', devoid therefore of any normative sense. Now we do not have many cultures but only one civilisation, because the latter disappears beneath the concept of culture. It is the triumph of the historicist vision of diversity, the triumph of multiculturalism over assimilation. Such is the meaning of the term in the well-known books by the late Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington: 'culture writ large'. Civilisation, says Huntington, 'is the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species'.⁷

As I do not wish to enter here into the distinct nuances and debates about the meaning of these two complex words, 'culture' and 'civilisation',⁸ I shall use the first in its habitual anthropological sense, the one that Edward B. Taylor gave it in his classic *Primitive Culture* (1871), in other words, as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society'. And I shall take the second, 'civilisation', to refer to the grouping of diverse cultures into large families, an operationalisation of the concept that is nowadays more useful than that supplied by Alfred Weber, given that we normally have at least two clear markers or identifiers of 'cultural families' (or 'civilisations' in Huntington's sense): first, the great religions, which always include a world view (a *Weltanschauung*) and therefore a particular ontology; and secondly, linguistic families normally linked to a particular type of script. Religion and writing are thus established as the main demarcators and markers of civilisations.

⁵ Sage Publications, London, 2004.

⁶ See Durkheim & Mauss (1971), 'A Note on the Notion of Civilization', *Social Research*, vol. 38, nr 4, p. 812.

⁷ S. Huntington (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, p. 48.

⁸ I did so years ago in 'La globalización cultural ¿Crisol, ensalada o gazpacho civilizatorio?', in *Lo que hacen los sociólogos. Libro homenaje a Carlos Moya*, CIS, Madrid, 2007, pp. 543-575.

Having said this, the initial conclusion is that some people, especially from the Americas, North America above all, but also some from South America, argue that Spain and/or Latin America are a 'cultural family' distinct from Western culture and, consequently, that of North America. Hence the question: is Latin America another civilisation? Does it belong to another cultural family distinct from the Western family? Two of the greatest analysts of civilisations provide radically different answers to such questions.

An intellectual contrast: Samuel Huntington and Arnold Toynbee

Samuel Huntington is the clearest proponent of the idea disputed in this paper. As is widely known, in 1993 Huntington initiated a major debate among international-relations theorists with the publication of an extremely influential and widely-cited article in *Foreign Affairs* titled 'The clash of civilizations'. In contrast to the thesis of post-Cold War civilisational convergence propounded by Fukuyama in his controversial book *The End of History*,⁹ Huntington put forward the argument for divergence and conflict, a thesis that he later developed into a widely-read book titled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.¹⁰

In it he argued that, although during the Cold War the most likely conflict was between the free Western world and the communist bloc –an internal conflict within the Western world– now it was more likely to be between the world's major civilisations and that we were condemned to a war of civilisations. It was an intriguing thesis, and the subsequent eruption of Islamic fundamentalism lent it great credibility.

Leaving aside the broader question of whether there is indeed a 'clash' or 'war' of civilisations, one of the most noteworthy elements of Huntington's work is his identification of eight distinct civilisations, namely: Western, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, Japanese and 'South American', as well as a possible ninth, the African. For Huntington, it was evident that Latin America did not form part of Western civilisation.

What then is the West as far as Huntington was concerned? The West comprises Western Europe (in particular the EU) and North America, but it also includes other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand that stemmed from Europe, and even the Pacific islands, East Timor, Suriname, French Guiana and (surprisingly) the north and central Philippines (perhaps because it was once a US colony?). Note that Russia is left out, as are (apparently), the Balkans and the Caucasus.

And what unifies these countries in cultural and civilisational terms? What are the characteristics of Western civilisation? Huntington mentions the following: the classical legacy, the multiplicity of languages, the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, the rule of law, social pluralism, individualism, political representation and, above all, Western Christianity, in other words Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

⁹ F. Fukuyama (1992), *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York.

¹⁰ Huntington (1996), *op. cit.*

Latin American civilisation by contrast, while closely linked to the West, 'incorporates indigenous culture' and is a hybrid between the Western world and the native peoples, and has a populist and authoritarian culture that Europe had too, but to a lesser degree, and that North America never had. Latin American countries are thus 'torn' countries, divided, such that the southern part of the continent encompasses two extremes: Mexico, Central America and the Andean countries, where the native population has a stronger presence, and Argentina and Chile, where it is scant.

It is rather striking to forget that corporatism and populism (ie, fascism and communism) were European inventions, not Latin American, but also that the Classical legacy, the multiplicity of languages, the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, the rule of law, social pluralism, individualism, political representation and, above all, Western Christianity, are descriptions that fit Latin America perfectly; or, finally, that hybridisation or racial mixing is not exclusive to Latin America. In his *Réflexions sur la monarchie universelle* (1731, chapter XVIII), Montesquieu had already written that '*l'Europe n'est plus q'une nation composée de plusieurs*', Europe as a 'nation of nations', a good description of the present EU. And recently, Giovanni Sartori, for instance, has said that the US is a 'nation made of nations'.¹¹ Are we to take it that the African presence or the cultural and immigrant diversity is lesser in the US than in Latin America?

At this point I would like to call an opposing witness, the great British historian Arnold Toynbee, who to a large extent was Huntington's mentor. When he compiled his list of 21 civilisations in his monumental *A Study of History*, completed in 1961, he did not include anything akin to a Spanish or Latin American civilisation. On the contrary, he referred to Spain and Portugal as the 'mobile frontiers' of Christianity, as an expanding 'march' or frontier. And the debt that the Western world owes the people of the Iberian Peninsula has never been better expressed than by the great English historian:

'These Iberian pioneers, the Portuguese vanguard, round Africa to Goa, Malacca and Macao, and the Castilian vanguard across the Atlantic to Mexico and on across the Pacific to Manila... performed an unparalleled service for Western Christendom. They expanded the horizon; and thereby potentially the domain, of the society they represented until it came to embrace all the habitable lands and navigable seas of the globe. It is owing in the first instance to this Iberian energy that Western Christendom has grown, like the grain of mustard seed in the parable, until it has become "the Great Society": a tree in whose branches all the nations of the Earth have come and lodged.'¹²

For Toynbee, 'Western Civilisation' embraces all the nations that have existed in Western Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. Spain and Portugal, however, were the seeds of the West's expansion throughout the world. And as such they were the frontier land, the frontier of Western civilisation, which made the leap from the Iberian Peninsula to the Americas. He devotes not a single word, of course, to a specific Latin American civilisation. And Toynbee coined an expression, that of 'Iberian pioneers', freighted with meaning and of course in counterpoint to those other pioneers who sailed on the Mayflower, who arrived on the coast of the present-day US in 1620. Incidentally, it is an

¹¹ See G. Sartori (2001), *La sociedad multiétnica*, Taurus, Madrid, p. 51.

¹² Arnold Toynbee (1947), *A Study of History*, New York, pp. 124 & 125.

expression that had already been used by an interesting figure, an American journalist and adventurer named Charles Fletcher Lummis, who in 1893 –note the date– published a book titled *The Spanish Pioneers*, a hymn in praise of the colonising work of Spain, the pioneer nation, in the Americas. It is unclear whether Toynbee read Lummis, but it is highly unlikely because the book had, and still has, very little impact.¹³

The North American vision: Turner and the frontier

One of the defining frontiers of Western civilisation, identified by Toynbee, is the work of the ‘Iberian pioneers’, moving from the south of the Iberian Peninsula to the Americas, from East to West. Another such frontier is Turner’s, ie, the work of other pioneers in transit from the British Isles to North America.

As is well known, Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932), Professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, first elaborated his thesis in a paper entitled *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, paradoxically delivered to the American Historical Association in 1893 at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. I say paradoxically because the thesis came to be the most thorough rejection of the role of Columbus and Spain and it was published in the same year that Lummis paid the greatest tribute to the labours of Spain in North America. As Alfredo Jiménez points out in *La Historia como fabricación del pasado: La frontera del Oeste o American West*:

‘The youthful Turner effectively claimed that the particular circumstances of the American frontier, such as the abundance of free and empty land, the opportunities that opened up to the colonisers, and the shared threat posed by the Native Americans shaped the American character and institutions. The experience of the frontier –claimed Turner–... had an effect of consolidating and cementing the nationhood of the young America. The frontier, in short, extended civilisation and fostered democracy.’¹⁴

What interests me is Turner’s notion of frontiers. He wrote:

‘The American frontier is sharply distinguished from the European frontier – a fortified boundary line running through dense populations. The most significant thing about the American frontier is, that it lies at the hither edge of free land.’

And prior to this he put forward his main idea: ‘the frontier is the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization’. It refers thus to the hither edge of free land, and the meeting point between savagery and civilisation. Is this correct? Of course not.

¹³ There is a ghastly Spanish translation that, unaccountably, leaves out perhaps the most important thing from the book –the idea of a pioneer nation– by giving it the title of *Exploradores españoles en América*, translating the expression ‘pioneer nation’ as ‘*nación exploradora*’, among other excesses. The fiasco was perpetrated by Editorial Laocoonte in Navarra in 2009.

¹⁴ Alfredo Jiménez (2001), ‘La Historia como fabricación del pasado: la frontera del Oeste o American West’, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, vol. 58, nr 2 (S), p. 737-755. The quote is from the p. 738.

Naturally, Spain is not even mentioned in Turner's essay. But this is strange because a large part of US territory (some say as much as three quarters) had already been explored or claimed by Spain, including Alaska. And many cities had been built in the south-west, in California and of course in Texas and Florida. What was on the other side of the frontier was sometimes free land, but sometimes and indeed often, the lands of other countries, Spain first and afterwards Mexico.

The frontier thesis forgot (or, it might even be said, concealed) Spain's role in North America, and replaced it with the US advance over unclaimed land, conceived in turn as the advance of civilisation over barbarism. Interestingly, it is the same thesis put forward by Kipling in *The White Man's Burden* published six years later in 1899, which had the rarely-mentioned subtitle of *The United States and the Philippine Islands* and was in fact a reaction to the Spanish-American War of 1898. This was precisely the launch-pad for US imperial expansion in the Atlantic (Cuba and Puerto Rico) and in the Pacific (the Philippines) and its transformation into an Imperial Republic (to use Raymond Aron's expression).

Of course, we know that this was partially correct. The great American landmasses had not been completely colonised. But the idea that the other side of the frontier, which means in fact Latin America, was not, and could not be, part of us, part of the West, but rather savage territory, was accepted. As Alfredo Jiménez argues: 'In conclusion, US historians have written the history of the frontier as though there had been nobody on the other side'.¹⁵

Subsequent historiography has profoundly revised Turner's mythical theses.¹⁶ The first to do so was Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870-1953) in *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*¹⁷ and more recently there has been David J. Weber's *The Spanish Frontier in North America*.¹⁸

But this myth, like all myths and beliefs, had consequences. It nurtured and lent a romantic aesthetic to the old idea of 'manifest destiny', coined by John L. O'Sullivan in 1845. It was the manifest destiny of the US to expand across a continent that Providence had assigned to it, thereby strengthening the Monroe Doctrine of 1823: 'America for the Americans' (an idea that made a comeback with President Trump). And against this backdrop the future President Theodore Roosevelt believed that the end of the internal frontier represented the start of a new chapter in the American story and the US should expand abroad. This is why many people see in Turner's thesis a US shift towards imperialism and even the intellectual legitimisation of the Cuban and Philippine war. Roosevelt was by all accounts a believer in Turner's thesis. And a not inconsiderable

¹⁵ Jiménez (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 753.

¹⁶ See Alfredo Jiménez (1996), 'El Lejano Norte español: cómo escapar del *American West* y de las *Spanish Borderlands*', *Colonial Latin American Historical Review (CLAHR)*, vol. 5, p. 381-412.

¹⁷ Herbert E. Bolton (1996), *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*, Foreword by Albert L. Hurtado, University of New Mexico Press Albuquerque, 1st edition 1921.

¹⁸ David J. Weber in *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, Yale University Press, 1992. There is an edition in Spanish published by the Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 2000.

(cont.)

number of Americans perceived this war –one of the few that can be cited between democracies– not as the conquest of Spain by the US but rather, on the contrary, the triumph in the US of the imperial and colonialist mentality of the old Spain, ‘the conquest of the United States by Spain’, as the great Yale sociologist William Graham Sumner put it.¹⁹

What is Latin America?

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a century and a half after Turner the US, in the guise of Huntington and Trump, should return to the thesis of the frontier holding foreign savagery at bay, once more epitomised by a wall that must separate it from the ‘bad hombres’ to the Latin south. And now we can return to our main question: can Latin America be referred to as part of the West?

As we know, ‘Latin America’ was a label created by Napoleon III in 1860 as a French anti-American political project concerning Mexico. France ought to have participated in a pan-Latin foreign policy as a counterweight to the English-speaking countries. But some of the arguments set out at the time by Michel Chevalier, the mouthpiece of Napoleon III’s ambitions, make sense. This is because they point directly to what Spain and Portugal did in the southern hemisphere: they ‘Romanised’ it and brought it within the Western fold. I shall express it straightforwardly. Spain and Portugal did in Latin America exactly what Rome had done with them 1,500 years previously: ‘Romanise’ or ‘Latinise’ it.

When the Spanish landed in the Americas, vast territories (virtually all of North America and all the Amazonian basin) were inhabited by myriad isolated groups of hunter-gatherers who knew their neighbours and little more. The Spaniards clashed with two major civilisations that were, however, already in decline, as shown by the ease of the conquest itself. ‘America’ as such did not exist and was unaware of itself, just as Spain was unaware of itself prior to being unified and labelled by Rome. The linguistic diversity that still survives in Latin America, with more than 1,000 living tongues, to which I shall turn shortly, gives a rough idea of what the pre-Columbian Americas must have been like prior to colonisation.

And it so happens that the same cultural elements that unified Spain and Portugal were later used to unify Latin America: two Romance or Latinate languages, Castilian and Portuguese; a Roman religion, Christianity; Roman law; Mediterranean architecture; the cities (following the Roman *castrum* model); the road networks (following the model of the *viae*, the Roman roads); and even agriculture. Exactly the same elements.

So is Latin America ‘Latin’, ‘Hispanic’ or ‘Iberian’? In other words, should we call it Ibero-America, Hispano-America or Latin America? All of them work. It is Latin precisely because this was the role of Spain and Portugal: to incorporate Central and South America (and a large portion of North America) into Graeco-Romanic culture. But to a large extent the Iberian peoples rather than inventors or creators were transmitters and

¹⁹ I refer to the interesting work published in 1899 in the *Yale Law Journal* by the great American sociologist William Graham Sumner, entitled *The Conquest of the US by Spain*.

carriers. The 'Latino' and 'Hispanic' labels, often debated in the US, both point in the same and correct direction, and in a way the confusion points to a truth: the quality of being Hispanic (or Lusitanian) is not substantially different from that of being Latin. Because what the Iberian peoples imposed was not *their* culture but the one they had been given. They did exactly the same as it had been done to them 1,500 years previously: Romanise diverse populations, giving them unity and incorporating them into the history of the Western world.

Of course, the civilising process was not without suffering: it was often terrible for the native populations and imposed amid much violence; just as occurred in the Iberian Peninsula with the process of 'Romanisation', incidentally. And, of course, there is and there was mixing, interbreeding and hybridisation, as happened here, giving rise to the Hispano-Roman. Many experts believe that the characteristic feature of Spanish colonialism (and even more so perhaps of Portuguese colonialism) was interbreeding. However, the US and Canada are also the product of interbreeding, albeit in a different way, as is Spain and almost all the nations of the world, with very few exceptions. Thus, as Mario Vargas Llosa has put it:

'Posing the Latin American problem in racial terms... is like wanting to replace the stupid and self-interested prejudices held by certain Latin Americans, who view themselves as white, against the Indians, with others, equally absurd, held by the Indians against the whites.'²⁰

Latin America: united but separated

But it is the shared fact of belonging to a 'Western cultural family' that lends Latin America a unity that did not exist before. Moreover, it bestows upon Latin America a level and degree of unity much greater than can be found in continents such as Asia, Africa and even Europe itself.

Admittedly, Latin America is not a political or even an economic unity, and the repeated attempts at fusion have borne little fruit. It does, however, enjoy an undeniable cultural unity. This is an idea that emerged at the very birth of the projects to unify Latin America, Bolívar's *Jamaica Letter* (1815) spelled it out:

'It is a grandiose idea to think of consolidating the New World into a single nation, united by pacts into a single bond. It is reasoned that, as these parts have a common origin, language, customs, and religion, they ought to have a single government to permit the newly formed states to unite in a confederation.'²¹

We know that it is divided by strong nationalistic currents stemming from wars, now gone but not forgotten. These currents are updated to stoke populism and channel the indigenous factor in both right- and left-wing versions of xenophobia towards the external world. This has given rise to a high degree of mutual mistrust between the region's countries that impedes and, up to now, has prevented fusion. Only Brazil is in a position

²⁰ See *Asoma en la región un nuevo racismo: indios contra blancos*, *La Nación*, 20/1/2006.

²¹ Translated by Lewis Bertrand in *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, The Colonial Press Inc., New York, 1951.

to exercise regional leadership, by virtue of its size, but mistrust abounds. Recast in terms of Europe, it is clear that Brazil is no Germany, nor Argentina France, nor Mexico England.

Nor is there a significant degree of economic union. Despite various integration deals, inter-regional trade flows in the whole of South America are the lowest in the world, at 22%, whereas in the EU they exceed 60% and in South-East Asia they account for 50% of trade.

Latin America is neither a political nor an economic unity. It is, however, and to an overwhelming degree, a cultural unity.

I indicated earlier that a true civilisation is identified above all by two markers: religion and language. A third is more difficult to pin down: ethnicity, although these days it can be quantified too and we have access to aggregated social fractionalisation indices, which measure the likelihood of two people chosen at random in a country belonging to distinct ethnic, linguistic and religious groups.

So in order for there to be a Latin American civilisation we would need to find that these variables unify the Latin American region while at the same time differentiating it from other regions. Does this in fact occur?

There is no doubt about the possible religious fractionalisation. The religious unity of Latin America, stemming from colonisation, is significant, as is the lack of differentiation from the rest of the West. Christianity is the dominant religion, just as it is in Europe and the US.

The same is true of languages. Indeed, it is the most normalised continent after Europe: the 1,000 languages that survive are spoken by only 47 million people with a very low average number of speakers per language, at just 47,464, prompting serious concerns about their disappearance (something that must be avoided, incidentally). By comparison, the average number of speakers per language in Asia is 1.5 million and in Africa more than 300,000. Only the Pacific region, with a similar number of languages (roughly 1,000), has a lower number of speakers per language, some 4,000 (10 times fewer).

Alberto Alesina of the University of Harvard and his colleagues have studied the ethnolinguistic fractionalisation indices of various regions of the world, including Latin America. The index measures the likelihood of two people in the same country picked at random belonging to distinct ethnic or linguistic groups. In terms of linguistic diversity, the probability is 18% in Latin America, the lowest in the world (the highest, in sub-Saharan Africa, is 60%, and in Western Europe it is 20%),²² thereby confirming the evidence for linguistic unity.

²² Alberto Alesina, Arnaud Devleeschauwer, William Easterly, Sergio Kurlat & Romain Wacziarg (2003), *Fractionalization*, *Journal of Economic Growth*, vol. 8, nr 2, p. 155-194.

The same cannot be said for ethnic fractionalisation, which, at 40% according to Alesina, is substantial. But in demographic terms it is of relatively little importance. Admittedly, the World Bank estimates that there are no fewer than 400 ethnic groups, but they account for a little over 10% of the region's population, between 40 and 50 million people, 90% of them concentrated in five countries, and in only four countries do they account for more than 20% (Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru and Ecuador). Much larger are the black and mixed-race populations (which is what pushes up Alesina's index), who account for 150 million people, 30% of the total population (Brazil 50%, Colombia 20% and Venezuela 10%). This group entirely lost its cultural references, however, over the long and terrible ordeal of slavery. Interbreeding was in any event a characteristic of Iberian colonisation, such that it is more and more difficult to find pure ethnic groups.

I lastly feel compelled to point out the remarkable unity of Latin America in an area that is more difficult to capture empirically but for which we fortunately have excellent measuring devices. I refer to the matter of the values, preferences and attitudes recorded by the World Values Survey (WVS).

The WVS is a global social research project that explores people's values and opinions, how these change over time and their social and political impact. Since 1981 a global network of social and political scientists has administered six waves of representative national surveys in almost 100 countries encompassing the greater part of the world's population (almost 90%), with more than 400,000 interviews in the database.

The WVS measures issues such as support for democracy, tolerance towards foreigners and ethnic minorities, support for gender equality, the role of religion and changes in levels of religiosity, the impact of globalisation, attitudes towards the environment, work, the family, politics, national identity, culture, diversity, insecurity and the welfare of the individual.

It is also evident that Latin America scores reasonably high in post-materialist values, despite its relative poverty, which places it on a par with the countries of Roman Catholic Europe and even close to some of the countries in Protestant Europe, the world's maximum exponents of post-materialism.

Remarkably, however, Latin America comes a long way down in the traditional vs secular-rational values axis, in other words it is a markedly traditional region, in this case partly at the level of African countries. But note that this is a characteristic it shares with some (albeit few) European countries (such as Poland) and that (what a surprise) the region is divided into two groups such that some Latin American countries, particularly from the southern cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, but including Brazil), are located at the level of a not inconsiderable number of English-speaking countries such as Ireland, Canada and even the US. Some are a clear exception to a worldwide trend that shows, after wave upon wave of surveys, a tendency towards less traditionalism.²³

It may be said therefore that as a 'cultural family', Latin America falls at the level of Roman Catholic Europe in terms of post-materialist values, but at least part of Latin America (the southern cone) is located at the level of English-speaking countries in maintaining a stable traditional mentality.

Thus, there is indeed considerable ethnic fragmentation (native and imported), which is to a large extent absorbed by a very strong religious, linguistic and cultural unity. Latin America is precisely that: Latinised America. To repeat: the Romans are not our Classical legacy because we, and they, are the Romans of the 21st century.

How Latin America should accept its historic responsibility within the framework of western civilisation

Perhaps Turner was right in his day. Perhaps we are facing a clash of civilisations, as Huntington claimed. In any event, the current border between Hispanics and English-speaking America has not moved towards the west but rather towards the north of the Río Grande. Some say that the US is becoming a Latinised America. Some, such as President Trump, seem to fear it. In more than one sense the change is apparent, and anyone can perceive it in the social fabric of many US cities from New York to Los Angeles to Miami. But at the same time, it is also true that Latin America is being 'Yankeeified' and that the US border is moving towards the south. Latin America is turning more and more to its large neighbour to the north, more and more towards the Pacific (towards China, in the case of the Pacific Alliance), and less and less towards Europe. The same is true of the US with its pivot to Asia initiated by Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. And given that all the Americas, north and south, are shifting towards the Pacific, the tendency to forget Europe will be strengthened across the continent.

²³ See Ronald Inglehart & Christian Welzel (2000), *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*, Cambridge University Press.

It is a dynamic that occurs on this side of the Atlantic too, because the EU also, following its most recent expansion, is increasingly oriented towards the East and less interested in the West and Latin America, with the exceptions of Spain and possibly Portugal. The Atlantic axis, which has constituted the backbone of the West and the world for more than three centuries, is losing its importance, and Trump and Brexit are at once the effect and cause of this tendency.

But Spanish is now the foremost foreign language in the schools and universities of the US. And although the US is still what it has always been, a graveyard for languages, perhaps (although only perhaps), the Spanish language might become an exception. There are as many Latinos in the US as there are Spaniards in Spain. In fact, the US is already a country of Latin America, and it is the third or fourth largest Hispanic country in the world after Mexico, Colombia and Spain (it may have already surpassed Spain). And the Hispanic community's purchasing power, its economic clout, is nowadays similar to Spain's, if not greater.

Thus, if we focus on what is happening from what Max Weber called a universal-historical perspective, from a global perspective in time and space, what we have in the Americas is not so much an accentuated multiculturalism, which also exists, but an emergent Hispanic melting-pot both in the US and in Spain. But overlain on top of this is the blending of the two great American cultures: the Hispanic and the Anglo. These are two branches of Western civilisation stemming from the world's first two maritime empires, which exported their languages to half the world, branches that fought in Europe, were separated by Turner's frontier in America and are now melding together, jumping over their historical frontiers. Because there is something new, something Anglo-Spanish, emerging in the Americas, north and south.

A final consideration relates to 'the rest', the Americans (northern and southern), the Europeans and the Spanish. The world is changing very fast. Western civilisation reached its zenith before the Second World War, when more than 80% of the earth and a similar proportion of people came under the sovereignty of Western countries. But Europe bled itself white in two internecine wars, two world wars, and first decolonisation followed later by globalisation and economic growth put an end to the period, the European age, the era of Western expansion that started in the 15th century with the Iberian pioneers.

For at least three or four centuries, the history of the world has been written in Europe. But this has now ended. In a few years, no more than 30 perhaps, Europe will account for roughly 6% of the world's population, something similar to the US, and Latin America will account for another 6% or 7%. The old West will thus account for less than 20% of the world's population. Meanwhile, Africa will account for another 20% and Asia 60%. China is already the second-largest economic power in terms of purchasing power parity. Many other great countries are catching up. Some are democratic (like India and Brazil). Others are not. Some are nuclear powers and others would like to be. Globalisation is emerging with an agenda of world problems (from terrorism to weapons of mass destruction to climate change, crime, emigration and many others) that we do not know how to manage. The United Nations system is obsolete, despite the fact that it is all we have. The world seems more and more like Europe at the end of the 19th century,

Westphalian Europe (as Kissinger would have it): a collection of great sovereign countries in an unstable balance of power, fighting among themselves to find their own living space and to control resources.

This is why we need a caucus of solid democratic countries that share history, languages, religions, values and beliefs, an alliance of democracies. The nucleus of this alliance is undoubtedly the transatlantic alliance between the US and Europe. But for present purposes, Latin America also constitutes a dimension of transatlantic relations, given the existence of the South Atlantic.

Today, however, Latin America appears to be wrapped up in its own problems and falls short of taking on global responsibilities. It has a strong presence in the G20 (Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, in addition to Spain) pending activation. Latin America should assert itself as what it is, an essential part of Western civilisation. This is advantageous for Spain and Portugal, of course; if those countries are anything in Europe and the world it is owing to this connection, and they are more relevant to the Americas the more European they become, but also vice versa. However, it is above all essential for Latin America itself. The division between the two Americas ought to disappear. The West is sustained by three pillars (Europe and the two Americas), not two. Indeed, as the fulcrum of global power shifts away from the old West, Turner could have well said that we are all on the same side of the frontier.